



Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen  
Institute for Human Sciences



## The Momentous '8': Rethinking the “Philosophy of Czech History”

Workshop at the *Institute for Human Sciences* (Vienna) – March 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

The year 2018 calls upon us to revisit the iconic moments of Czech history which are also crucial events for European history. One has often noted the outstanding meaning of the momentous “8” in Czech, or better: Czechoslovak, history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: The national independence and formation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, the Munich Agreement of 1938 allowing Nazi Germany the annexation of the ‘Sudetenland’ and subsequently the occupation of the whole country, the seizing of complete power by the Communist Party in 1948, the world-wide observed crushing of the ‘Prague Spring’ in 1968 and, finally, the ‘Velvet Revolution’ of 1988/89 – all of these historical dates not only carry an almost emblematic significance in the national context but indicate turning points for European history.

This European dimension might be especially visible for the year 1918 witnessing the end of the Hapsburg Empire which was tantamount to a fundamental restructuring of European power constellations and not any less for the events of 1968 which fundamentally changed European societies, but entailed different messages and underwent quite diverging perceptions in East and West. As Milan Kundera once nicely put it, the 1968 protests in Paris were regarded as the enthralling outbreak of “revolutionary lyricism,” while Prague Spring – simultaneously, yet reversely – signaled the onset of “post-revolutionary skepticism.” The 50<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of both historical caesuras and the spell of the momentous “8” invite us to rethink the “philosophy of Czech history” that for Jan Patočka had the fascinating quality of a unique phenomenon in European historiography.

## Program

*Thursday, March 8<sup>th</sup>*

18 – 19.30

Welcome: LUDGER HAGEDORN

--- KEYNOTE LECTURE ---

**JACQUES RUPNIK**

*The "8s" in Czecho-Slovak 20<sup>th</sup> Century history as European turning points*

Chair: IVAN VEJVODA

--- followed by Wine & Cheese ---

*Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>*

09:30 Opening

*The 'Momentous 8' and its Challenges for Today's Debate*

9:45 – 11:00 Session 1

CHAIR: LUDGER HAGEDORN

**André Liebich**

*How did Czechoslovakia come into existence in 1918?*

**Zdenko Maršalek**

*Defend the Nation: The Czechoslovak Army and the crucial "Eights" (1918, 1938, 1948, 1968, 1988/9)*

11:30 – 12:45 Session 2

CHAIR: SANDRA LEHMANN

**Ludger Hagedorn**

*Humanism contested: Beneš and the totalitarian onslaught of 1938/1948 in the eyes of Jan Patočka*

**Natalia Danilkina**

*The intellectual history of Europe in the 1948/49 correspondence of Jan Patočka and Sergius Hessen*

----- Lunch break -----

Venue: IWM Cafeteria

14:15 – 15:30 Session 3

CHAIR: MAREK TOMIN

**Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz**      *The Eye in the Hurricane. 1968 and the Whirlwind of Times*

**Johann Arnason**                      *Patočka in 1968: a close reading of 'Intelligentsia and Opposition'*

16:00 – 17:15 Session 4

CHAIR: IVAN VEJVODA

**Zuzana Hudáková**                      *The Last Years of the Czechoslovak Regime: The 1980s through the Eyes of the State Security Services*

**Ondřej Slačálek**                      *The changing notions of liberty and freedom in the debates on the "meaning of Czech history"*

17:30 – 18:15 Session 5

CHAIR: DANIEL COHEN

**Muriel Blaive**                      *Lucky Stars in the Czechoslovak History Lotto: What Significance for the Numbers 58 and 78?*

-- Farewell Dinner --

Note

This meeting emphasizes debate and workshop style. There will be no pre-circulated papers. Presentations should not exceed roughly 20 minutes and be designed to fuel debate.